



**Comments of the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter before the  
Great Lakes and Environment Committee and the  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Environmental Quality  
Joint Hearing on the Future of the Wetlands Program  
March 17, 2009**

Submitted by Gayle Miller, Legislative Director

While the State of Michigan is facing tremendous budgetary challenges, it is critical that leaders not lose sight of the long term impacts of decisions made today. Sharply declining funding from Michigan's critical environmental programs over the past decade, coupled with the economic recession ravaging our state today, have created impossible choices. Despite years of efforts by the Administration and the Department of Environmental Quality to highlight the funding problems, a permanent, sustainable funding mechanism for these critical programs still does not exist. But the **Legislature should not reverse Michigan's thirty years of leadership in the protection of our critical wetland resources.**

The challenge today is to assure that Michigan's unique place in the heart of the Great Lakes, our tremendous hunting, fishing and wildlife resources, and our dependence on wetlands for flood control and clean water are not lost in the scramble to address long overdue funding problems. Most important is to avoid compromising the state's long-standing protections for almost one million acres of non-contiguous wetlands that would become unprotected if the State's best-in-the-nation law were repealed.

The Sierra Club Michigan Chapter urges the Michigan Legislature to **assure that the State of Michigan continues to oversee wetlands protections.** We urge the legislature to use the heightened attention to this crisis to craft a long term strategy for assuring proper funding and to address programmatic deficiencies that may exist. Sierra Club is eager to assist in crafting a sustainable funding solution that protects Michigan's precious wetlands.